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NEWSPAPER ARTICLE REGARDING "ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANUP FUNDS
REDUCED"NSB KINGS BAY GA
7/10/1995
THE FLORIDA TIMES-UNION

The Florida Times-Union

6.2.2

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Monday, July 10, 1995

1995 Year - 1995 - 1995

Environmental cleanup funds reduced



— Bob Senesi

A front-end loader dumps soil contaminated with jet fuel into a hopper that feeds into a furnace at Jacksonville Naval Air Station

Jacksonville's NAS hit hard

by John Fritz
staff writer

A witch's cauldron of toxic waste polluting military bases in Jacksonville and across the country is continuing to brew because of cuts in the budget for environmental cleanup.

The new Republican Congress — the enemy in the eyes of many environmentalists — slashed \$300 million for cleanup work at bases this year and has proposed wiping out \$200 million next year.

"This represents the first line of an assault on cleaning up contamination," said Edwin Kripke, who follows environmental budget issues for Friends of the Earth. The military's spending overall is not climbing nearly as fast as spending on military cleanup," Kripke said. "The issue is priorities. Many in the new Congress have decided that cleaning up contamination is not a priority."

The result of decades of environmental war, military bases nationwide are pol-

luted with PCBs, mercury, cadmium and other dangerous toxics. They can cause myriad health problems, from cancer to liver, kidney and brain damage.

This year's cuts stopped cleanup at some of the Defense Department's most polluted sites. Contamination at some might be 100 times greater than the legal standard, said Sherri Wasserman Goodman, the Pentagon's top official on environmental matters.

Bases in Jacksonville and South Georgia lost \$3.7 million from their fiscal 1995 cleanup funds.

Citizens should get involved and let their elected representatives know if they are concerned about what is happening, said Goodman, deputy undersecretary of defense for environmental security.

"It's their health, their environment and their communities that are at risk," Goodman said.

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Environmental cuts

Cuts to the Department of Defense Environmental Restoration Account, the military's primary account to investigate and clean up toxic waste sites at active military bases, for fiscal year 1995 include:

Where	DERA budget	Amount eliminated
Jacksonville Naval Air Station	\$14 million	\$2.6 million
Mayport Naval Station	Approx. \$5 million	\$275,000
Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base	N/A*	\$800,000
Nationwide	\$1.78 billion	\$300 million

* Kings Bay officials could not provide DERA budget.
Note: Cecil Field was not affected by DERA cuts because money for its cleanup comes from a separate account set up for cleanup of bases slated for closure.
Source: U.S. Navy

Military environmental cleanup funds reduced

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Unfortunately, the reductions come when many bases are moving from conducting studies to doing physical cleanups, Kripke said. Next year, 60 percent of the funds are earmarked for actual cleanup — the largest percentage to date.

"It doesn't seem this is the time to be cutting funding," Kripke said. "Just when we're trying to start doing the real cleanup, Congress is yanking the money out."

In its fiscal 1996 defense authorization bill, the House cut \$300 million from the Pentagon's \$1.62 billion request for cleanup funds.

A cut of that magnitude could mean a \$10 million loss for Florida next year — 20 percent of the \$50 million it is slated to receive, Goodman said.

The cuts for base cleanup are "pretty much in line with what Congress is doing to the environment in general, specifically the Clean Water Act, specifically the Endangered Species Act," said Dan Donaldson, chairman of the Northeast Florida Sierra Club.

"It doesn't surprise me," he said. "It's not an environmentally friendly Congress — that's a fact."

Hardest hit locally this year, Jacksonville Naval Air Station lost \$2.6 million of \$14 million earmarked for the study and cleanup of toxic waste sites, officials said. The base was declared a federal Superfund environmental cleanup site in 1989.

"This is going to be painful. There's no way around it," said Stuart Johnston, a spokesman for Jacksonville NAS.

The base has devised ways to reduce or postpone cleanup costs at some polluted sites. And pre-cleanup investigations at other sites will be delayed, said Kevin Gartland, environmental director.

"It slows us down, it does not stop us," Gartland said. No cleanups currently under way will be affected by the midstream funding cuts, he stressed.

The largest single cut was \$3 million to dispose of dirt contaminated with radioactive radium paint used through the late 1950s to make glow-in-the-dark aircraft dials.

Now, instead of the dirt being trucked to a hazardous waste landfill, it will be dumped at a contaminated landfill on base, and the whole area will be cleaned up later, Gartland said.

Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base, Ga., lost \$600,000 for treating contaminated ground water seeping from an abandoned landfill polluted with cancer-causing vinyl chloride. A plume of contaminated water already has reached the adjacent Crooked River Plantation.

Officials at Kings Bay, like those at the other affected bases, say the contamination poses no imminent health threat.

Mayport Naval Station will delay cleaning a jet fuel spill near the waterfront and abandoned wastewater sludge drying beds. The base lost \$275,000 of its approximately \$5 million cleanup budget because of the mid-year budget reductions.

Earlier this year, Congress voted to slash \$300 million, about 15 percent, from the approved \$1.75 billion Department of Defense Environmental Restoration Account.

Known as DEERA, it is the primary cash pool for cleaning up contamination at active military bases.

Florida, which lost \$13 million, was hardest hit after Alaska, California, Texas, Utah and Virginia.

Bases scheduled to close, such as Cecil Field, another Jacksonville Superfund site, are part of a "fast track" cleanup program. Money for them comes from a separate account.

The DEERA cuts, piled on top of a budget already \$400 million lighter than the administration requested, were spread across all the armed services. The Navy's share was \$47 million.

The reductions were aimed at funneling more money into defense training and readiness and to offset the costs of U.S. military peace-keeping operations, Kripke said.

During last year's readiness debate, U.S. Rep. Mike Fowler, R-Fla., complained about "increasingly spending precious defense dollars on non-defense items" such as environmental cleanup.

"Paying for these non-defense items is another strain on defense dollars and readiness," said Fowler.

Fowler said nobody disagrees the bases must be cleaned up. The controversy is over who should pay.

"There are a lot of us who really think the money should be allocated and come out of EPA," Fowler said, referring to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Others in Congress argue the military made the mess and should be responsible for cleaning it up.

In our view, environmental cleanup is a real cost incurred by DOD in pursuance of its national security responsibilities, and, like any other kind of overhead cost, should be paid for out of its budget," says a letter members of Congress were being urged to sign.

The letter to Rep. C.W. Young, R-Fla., chairman of the national security subcommittee on the House Committee on Appropriations, is being circulated by Reps. Gerry

Studds, D-Mass., and Robert Ehrlich, R-Md.

"Defense is about more than buying bombs and fighting wars," Goodman said in a interview. "Defense is also about being part of community, and, therefore, we must be responsible citizens."

The Department of Defense is committed to cleaning up its past pollution not only because it has a legal mandate, but because it is the right thing to do, Goodman said.

"We want to protect the people who live in and around our military bases," she said. "We believe the men and women of our armed forces and the communities that support them are entitled to a clean and healthy environment."

Navy Installs Additional Wells

By BRANDI TIPPS
Staff Writer

A little more than one year after the initial discovery of contaminated ground water at the old county landfill and in some areas of Crooked River Plantation, the Navy already has started the estimated \$4 million process, which will lead to a complete cleanup.

ABB Environmental Services, a firm contracted by the Navy to conduct the initial investigation and conduct cleanup efforts, already has begun drilling 15 monitoring wells around the landfill and will begin drilling 10 additional monitoring wells within Crooked River Plantation Subdivision on Wednesday.

Laura Harris, field operations leader for drilling with ABB Environmental Services, said the monitoring wells are being installed so they will have permanent locations to monitor the ground water and all the wells in the subdivision should be completed by Thanksgiving.

Ms. Harris said drilling will begin about 8 a.m. each morning and

be completed by 6 p.m.

"There will be some noise and we may have to block some driveways because of the size of the equipment but residents will be notified in advance," she said.

Also, parents should advise children not to play around the drilling rigs while they are in operation, she said.

Ms. Harris said it takes about a day to complete one well and once all the wells have been drilled crews will come back in December to take samples from the wells.

Additionally, ABB also will continue to sample the air around the landfill and the subdivision as well as the water in Porcupine Lake.

Lt. Cmdr. Mike Patterson, with the Public Works department at the base, said they are waiting on approval from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources before ABB can begin pumping the water out of the ground and treating it.

He said he expects to get the approval around Feb. 1, 1994.

Once the water is treated it will be released to the St. Marys water system or to the Base Land Appli-

cation system, said Tracey Keel, site engineer with ABB Environmental Services.

Lt. Cmdr. Patterson said he would prefer the water be released into the city's system because it is a public system and that route would require less approval from regulatory agencies.

Mr. Keel said after the water is treated and ready to be released ABB will run a pilot test in which about 40 gallons of water per minute will be released 24 hours a day for 45 days.

This test is designed to determine the effectiveness of water treatment, Lt. Cmdr. Patterson said.

There are two ways in which the water can be treated, Mr. Keel said.

Micro-organisms, which will eat the contaminants, can be placed into the water or air can be passed through the water to separate the contaminants from the water, he said.

The contaminants would be pushed into the air and caught on a carbon filter, which would then be

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WORKERS WITH ABB Environmental Services pull water from a recovery well at the old county landfill.

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Wells

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disposed of at a waste treatment plant, Mr. Keel said.

After ABB receives approval from Ga. DNR around Feb. 1, it will begin experimenting with the two methods of treating the water, he said.

"We don't know what the final solution will be," Lt. Cmdr. Patterson said. "We could remove the source of the contaminants or cap the landfill, but chances are we'll never find the source because more than likely there's more than one source."

"What we want to emphasize is that everything we're doing is not a final cut and dry solution," Mr. Keel said. "It may take care of the problem and it may not."

Lt. Cmdr. Patterson said if pumping out the groundwater and treating it is the solution, it probably will take several years before all the water is clean.

The Navy currently is paying for the cleanup of the contaminants through its Installation-Restoration Program and to date has spent \$2.3 million.

Lt. Cmdr. Patterson said at a later date the Navy may try to recover

some of the cost from those who contributed to the waste at the landfill.

The Navy still maintains the contaminants discovered in the ground water pose minimal risk to residents in the area but have asked that they voluntarily discontinue use of their private irrigation systems for watering lawns, washing outdoor items and recreation.

The initial discovery of vinyl chloride resulted from Navy testing, in February 1992, of wells around the old county landfill located across from Crooked River Plantation subdivision on federal property.

During testing 17 contaminants were found beginning 16 feet below ground level and running as deep as 51 feet, but no contaminants were detected in the air, in Porcupine Lake or in shallow groundwater.

Of the 17 contaminants identified in the plume, seven are carcinogens and 10 are non-carcinogens.